

Career Technical Education Is at Center of Education and Workforce Needs

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Career technical education (CTE) was designed to provide learners with opportunities to explore career paths and gain technical skills. We have learned that a strong CTE system that integrates technical and academic skill attainment can help sustain America's economy, which now depends on having a highly skilled workforce, coupled with workers having the capacity to adapt as jobs evolve with emerging technologies. CTE is growing and improving to meet these demands. In fact, communities and states around the nation are meeting these demands, in part, by implementing the rigorous provisions of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act (Perkins Act). The last time Congress updated this law was in 1998, and legislators plan to revisit this statute in the near future.

The Perkins Act primarily provides grants to states for CTE programs in high schools and postsecondary institutions (community and technical colleges). The Perkins Act now requires greater accountability for the use of federal dollars than ever before. At the same time, greater flexibility is given to states and local districts in how funds are used. For example, these resources can be used for: the development of innovative strategies to create and deliver CTE curricula, including through business partnerships; the integration of academic and CTE coursework; and professional development.

Unfortunately, the President unveiled a Perkins reauthorization proposal in early February that does not appear to value the benefits of the CTE system infrastructure, which currently serves as the springboard from which innovative and quality practices grow. Currently, the plan recommends not only a substantial cut in funding (from \$1.33 to \$1 billion), the proposal appears to severely limit students' access to secondary CTE programs. The other major change proposed in the Administration proposal is that interested schools would have to complete a grant application in order to compete for the money, hampering their ability to do long-term planning.

The National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (State Directors) agrees with the goals of the proposed program (including increasing students' successful transitions to postsecondary experiences). However, the State Directors and others have major concerns with the Administration's proposal and its potentially devastating effects on the CTE system. As the President has indicated in prior years, a focus on high quality education and jobs is a key tool in meeting the current economic challenges of this country.

In an effort to demonstrate business support for the CTE system, the State Directors have developed a business resolution describing CTE as a tool to meet workforce needs. In the fall, the resolution and its list of business supporters will be delivered to policymakers to demonstrate the widespread support for CTE. Please don't miss the August 29th deadline to sign on to show your support for the federal role and investment in the CTE system.

We all know that CTE helps expand the pool of qualified persons to keep American productivity high and support economic growth. As a community concerned with our future workforce, we cannot afford to ignore any efforts to de-value the CTE system—either at the secondary or postsecondary level! Therefore, I challenge you to get more involved and reach out to your community partners and legislators to ensure that policymakers build on the improvements in the CTE system instead of dismantling them.